

5.0 VASONA LIGHT RAIL AND ROUTE 85 ELEMENT

5.1 HISTORY

This element of the General Plan replaces the Route 85 Element that was adopted as part of the 1985 General Plan and updates the Route 85 and Vasona Light Rail Element (VLR Element) that was adopted in 1994 after extensive public input. In October 1990 the Town Council approved several agreements with the State Department of Transportation and the Santa Clara County Traffic Authority regarding the design of Route 85. In summary, the agreements allow Cal Trans to construct a 6-lane freeway through the Town with the median of the freeway reserved for mass transit. In addition, the Vasona Light Rail is proposed to utilize the existing Southern Pacific Railroad Tracks located adjacent to Winchester Boulevard for a mass transit facility that would terminate in Los Gatos at Route 85 and would connect with the Cahill Street Station in San Jose. A Park and Ride facility is proposed to be located adjacent to Route 85 on Winchester Boulevard. Ultimately, the Vasona Light Rail will be extended southbound into the median of Route 85 toward San Jose and northbound following the existing Southern Pacific right-of-way toward Cupertino.

This element of the General Plan is warranted because it is critical that the Town take advantage of the opportunities and respond to the challenges created by Route 85 and the Vasona Light Rail. The unique nature of these transportation facilities necessitates that the Town take a proactive role in planning for the future of the surrounding areas. The Vasona Light Rail and Route 85, as well as the land uses planned for the surrounding areas, will affect and benefit the entire community. Consequently, these issues have been addressed as a separate element to the General Plan in order to incorporate corresponding impacts in other elements of the General Plan for internal consistency.

5.2 INTRODUCTION

Construction of Route 85 has had a significant impact on traffic within the Town since it was opened in October 1994. Reductions of traffic volumes on some arterials and collector streets has occurred, while others have experienced increases. Route 85 is approaching capacity during the peak commute hours, but is still a desirable primary route for autos. The freeway provides for a future mass transit system and it is rational to assume that a portion of the existing commuting traffic that utilizes Route 85 and Town streets would utilize such a facility. In addition, the proposed Vasona Light Rail is closer than ever to being a reality, with plans to build the facility as far south as Campbell within the next few years. These systems would provide a much needed means of connecting Los Gatos with regional mass transit systems and through mass transit with the rest of Silicon Valley and the Bay Area.

Since Route 85 and the Vasona Light Rail will have a significant impact on transportation within the Town, it is critical to determine what land uses will best take advantage of these transportation facilities as well as meet the needs of the Town. It is also critical that the Town determine when these land uses can be implemented. The Town has continually taken a proactive approach on this important issue and support's land uses that promote and take advantage of the transit opportunities afforded while also meeting the housing and commercial needs of the Town.

As stated in the Housing Element, Los Gatos has a need for affordable housing, both for seniors and families. Areas adjacent to the Vasona Light Rail facility and Route 85 would be good locations for meeting these Town needs due to their proximity to mass transit and to commercial needs of the future residents.

Los Gatos is a special place, and it is important to demarcate our boundaries when entering or leaving from/to other cities. Open space and gateways, including open space as gateways, are means of doing so. The Route 85 study area offers opportunities to preserve and use open space for this purpose.

The VLR Element consists of general goals, policies and implementation measures that apply to the entire VLR Element area shown on the map included as figure 5.1. The area generally encompasses the area bounded by Capri Dr. and Winchester Blvd. on the west, Vasona Lake on the south, National Ave. on the east, and the northern Town limits. This area was defined based on the land use and circulation patterns and the proximity of property to existing and future transportation facilities.

5.3 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Throughout the process of preparing this element, several basic planning principles served as the foundation for designations for land use for the area. These guiding principles are repeated throughout the text of this element in one form or another. **The overarching principle guiding land use planning for the area is that development shall be community oriented, pedestrian oriented, and transit oriented and designed and scaled to maintain a small-town character.** This concept, more than any other, is exemplified in the guiding principles below and throughout this element, ensuring orderly development of the area and the Town.

ROUTE 85 AND VASONA LIGHT RAIL ELEMENT GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- ☐ **DEVELOPMENT SHALL NOT EXCEED TRANSPORTATION CAPACITY**
- ☐ **EXISTING ZONING OF LAND AROUND VASONA LIGHT RAIL SHALL BE MAINTAINED UNTIL VASONA LIGHT RAIL IS PLANNED AND FUNDED**
- ☐ **RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SHALL FURTHER THE TOWN'S HOUSING GOALS, AS OUTLINED IN THE HOUSING ELEMENT**
- ☐ **A MIXTURE OF NON-RESIDENTIAL USES THAT SERVE RESIDENTS NEEDS, MAINTAIN THE CHARACTER OF LOS GATOS, AND COMPLEMENT EXISTING AND PLANNED USES IS DESIRABLE**
- ☐ **PUBLIC UTILITIES SHALL BE DESIGNED AND UPGRADED TO ACCOMMODATE BUILD-OUT**
- ☐ **MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS SHALL BE PROCESSED AS PLANNED DEVELOPMENTS**

In addition to general policies that apply throughout the area, specific goals, policies and implementation measures are identified for each of the four sub-areas.

5.4 GOALS, POLICIES, IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIES

ISSUE 1:

The Vasona Light Rail and mass transit facilities to be installed in the median of Route 85 will link the Town with the rest of Silicon Valley and the Bay Area. The Town needs to address how it can take advantage of the mass transit opportunities presented by these connections.

Goal:

- V.G.1.1 To promote the construction of Vasona Light Rail and mass transit facilities in the Route 85 median.

Policies:

- V.P.1.1 Future development shall offer or contribute to transit services that link the Vasona Light Rail with the rest of Los Gatos.
- V.P.1.2 The Town shall continue to support and promote Route 85 as a multi-modal facility that includes a freeway with High Occupant Vehicle (HOV) lanes, mass transit uses in the median (light rail and/or express buses), and connections to the Vasona Light Rail facility.
- V.P.1.3 Circulation planning for the Town shall recognize the potential for mass transit connections via Route 85 and the Vasona Light Rail.
- V.P.1.4 Facilities developed for Vasona Light Rail station and Route 85 mass transit connections shall be safe, convenient, and attractive for bicycle and pedestrian use.

Implementing Strategies:

- V.I.1.1 Mass transit: Cooperate and coordinate with all appropriate agencies to facilitate construction of mass transit.

Time Frame: On-going
Responsible Party: Planning and Town Council

- V.I.1.2 Mass transit: Coordinate and proactively participate with other communities and agencies to ensure that the proposed mass transit facilities are acceptable to the Town.

Time Frame: On-going
Responsible Party: Planning and Town Council

- V.I.1.3 Transportation Alternative: Development shall provide Transportation Alternative programs or facilities that help link development and mass transit. These programs may include providing bicycle racks, shower and locker facilities, transit passes to employees, etc. In-lieu fees or other funding mechanisms may be required to provide a shuttle for the area.

Time Frame: On-going
Responsible Party: Planning and Deciding Body

Residential Land Uses

- V.I.1.4 Shuttle system: Work with the transportation agencies to determine the feasibility and means of financing a Town wide shuttle system.

Time Frame: 2000 - 2005
Responsible Party: Planning and Engineering

ISSUE 2:

There are more large parcels of land that are suitable for residential development within the area than within any other area of the Town. The current uses of these parcels range from orchards to underutilized residential property to manufacturing. The commonality of all of these parcels is their proximity to future mass transit and their capability of helping the Town meet its housing goals, as outlined in the housing element. The issue is which types of housing needed by the Town are best suited for siting within the area, and where within the area they should be constructed.

Goal:

- V.G.2.1 To encourage affordable housing (senior housing, multi-family housing, mixed use w/housing) in appropriate locations that address the Town's housing needs and take advantage of the opportunities afforded by mass transit.
- V.G.2.2 To encourage mixed use developments that coordinate housing in proximity to either neighborhood commercial uses or work/residential uses.
- V.G.2.3 To reduce traffic impacts of residential development within the area by taking advantage of mass transit opportunities.

Policies:

- V.P.2.1 Residential development proposals within the area must demonstrate how they address the Town's unmet housing goals for affordable housing.
- V.P.2.2 Mixed use proposals within the area must address how the uses within the development are compatible and synergistic.
- V.P.2.3 Residential development proposals within the area must address how they take advantage of mass transit opportunities.

Implementing Strategies:

- V.I.2.1 Residential Development applications will be reviewed for consistency with the General Plan.

Time Frame: On-going
Responsible Party: Applicant and Planning

ISSUE 3:

The area has easy access to both Route 85 and Highway 17, and includes connections to both major north-south arterials (Winchester and Los Gatos Blvd.) and one major east-west arterial (Lark Ave.). The area contains large underdeveloped parcels that may be suitable for commercial or recreational uses.

Non-Residential Land Uses

*Limiting Adverse
Impacts and
Timing of
Development*

Goal:

- V.G.3.1 To provide opportunity for land uses that address the recreational needs of the Town.
- V.G.3.2 To provide opportunity for a variety of non-residential land uses within the area.

Policies:

- V.P.3.1 Sites for recreational open space and playfields shall have convenient access and be designed with adequate buffers if adjacent to residential uses.
- V.P.3.2 Commercial development of any type (office, retail, research & development, etc.) shall be designed in keeping with the small town character of Los Gatos.
- V.P.3.3 Encourage a mix of commercial, office and light industrial and recreational uses within the area, especially in areas less suited to residential development due to noise.
- V.P.3.4 Encourage mixed use commercial in conjunction with affordable housing.

Implementing Strategies:

- V.I.3.1 Non-residential Development applications shall be reviewed for compliance with the General Plan and must limit impacts on residential uses.

<u>Time Frame:</u>	On-going
<u>Responsible Party:</u>	Applicant

ISSUE 4:

Residential and non-residential uses produce different impacts on the community. The impacts on traffic, noise, schools, open space and other quality of life issues will vary, depending on the final mixture of residential and non-residential uses approved within the area. The overall planning for the area needs to limit the adverse impacts on the quality of life of all of the residents of Los Gatos and to provide for open space.

Goal:

- V.G.4.1 To limit the adverse impacts of development within the area.
- V.G.4.2 To encourage the best mixture of residential and nonresidential uses within the area which achieves the least impact on traffic, noise, schools, etc.
- V.G.4.3 To provide for suitable open space.

Policies:

- V.P.4.1 Development shall not exceed transportation capacity.
- V.P.4.2 The siting scale and design of buildings in relationship to each other shall facilitate and encourage pedestrian gathering.

- V.P.4.3 Major development projects shall be processed as planned developments.
- V.P.4.4 The design of structures and open space shall be compatible with the small-town character of Los Gatos.
- V.P.4.5 Development shall facilitate the upgrading of utilities to that needed by the area when it is fully developed.

Implementing Strategies:

- V.I.4.1 Design guidelines shall be adopted and used to review development applications within the area for issues unique to the area (gateway, scenic vistas, open space, etc.)

Time Frame: 2000 - 2005

Responsible Party: Planning

- V.I.4.2 Project applicants must evaluate and provide appropriate mitigation measures to reduce impacts on urban services including schools, utilities, police and fire.

Time Frame: On-going

Responsible Party: Planning

- V.I.4.3 Project applicants shall demonstrate how the project meets the specific goals and policies of this section.

Time Frame: On-going

Responsible Party: Planning

- V.I.4.4 Require environmental audits (Phase I assessments) for all sites where property is suspected of containing any toxins.

Time Frame: On-going

Responsible Party: Applicants

5.5 POLICIES FOR SPECIFIC AREAS

Policies:

- V.P.5.1 No change in zoning shall be allowed until development of the Vasona Light Rail is planned and funded.
- V.P.5.2 Development in this area shall consist of housing that meets the affordable housing goals of the Town and neighborhood commercial uses that provide services to all residents of Los Gatos.
- V.P.5.3 Mixed use commercial/housing developments may be considered in this sub-area.
- V.P.5.4 The Town shall work with developers, the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), and other agencies to ensure that this sub-area is developed in a manner that takes full advantage of the transit opportunities afforded by the Vasona Light Rail and any mass transit provided in Route 85.

Vasona Junction

V.P.5.5 Projects developed in this sub-area shall contribute to a pedestrian/bicycle bridge over Los Gatos Creek.

V.P.5.6 Projects developed in this sub-area shall contribute and enhance the natural view corridor and landscape of the Los Gatos Trail.

Implementing Strategies:

V.I.5.1 Existing zoning and uses will be maintained until Vasona Light Rail is planned and funding is approved. Development may be phased with the completion of the Vasona Light Rail. In no case may development exceed transportation capacity.

Time Frame: Dependant upon timing of Vasona Light Rail
Responsible Party: Planning

V.I.5.2 Process major development projects as planned developments.

Time Frame: On-going
Responsible Party: Planning

V.I.5.3 Evaluate whether development of air rights at the Vasona Light Rail station facility should be allowed or could feasibly be accomplished without creating visual congestion or violating the small-town character of Los Gatos. If allowable, coordinate with the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) and other agencies to allow development of appropriate uses (affordable housing and neighborhood commercial and businesses that cater to commuters).

Time Frame: 2000 - 2005
Responsible Party: Planning

V.I.5.4 Orient development to take advantage of the amenities of the Los Gatos Creek and the Creek Trail. Establish in-lieu fees for new projects that will fund a pedestrian/bicycle bridge over Los Gatos Creek.

Time Frame: 2000 - 2005
Responsible Party: Planning

V.I.5.5 Develop a pedestrian/bicycle bridge over Los Gatos Creek through development fees, grants, and other means available to the Town.

Time Frame: Dependant upon development
Responsible Party: Planning

V.I.5.6 Evaluate projects as to how the built environment naturally blends into the surrounding landscape in such areas as: scale, materials, hardscape, lights and landscape.

Time Frame: On-going
Responsible Party: Planning

Policies:

V.P.6.1 Development shall be designed to take advantage of the amenities offered by Los Gatos Creek and to preserve watersheds, riparian habitats and wildlife corridors.

Oka Road

- V.P.6.2 Development projects shall incorporate design features to buffer dwelling units from the visual and noise impacts of Highway 17 and Route 85.
- V.P.6.3 The maintenance road along the east side of Los Gatos Creek shall function for emergency access.
- V.P.6.4 Develop a pedestrian/bicycle bridge across Los Gatos Creek and a continuous trail system along the east side of Los Gatos Creek from Lark Ave. to the northern Town limit in keeping with the Trails and Bikeways Master Plan.

Implementing Strategies:

- V.I.6.1 Orient and site residential units to take advantage of the amenities of the Los Gatos Creek Trail system and to preserve watersheds, riparian habitats and wildlife corridors.

Time Frame: On-going
Responsible Party: Planning

- V.I.6.2 Require a noise study for development applications, identifying degrees of impact and noise attenuation measures, if necessary, to mitigate noise impacts on residential neighborhoods.

Time Frame: On-going
Responsible Party: Planning

- V.I.6.3 Provide emergency access to Lark Ave. via the Santa Clara Valley Water District maintenance road for properties between Los Gatos Creek and Oka Road through conditions on development applications.

Time Frame: On-going
Responsible Party: Planning

- V.I.6.4 Provide a trail connection for pedestrians and bicyclists along Los Gatos Creek adjacent to Bonnie View Mobile Home Park and the Santa Clara Valley Water District maintenance facility to complete the trail along the east side of Los Gatos Creek from Lark Ave. to the northern Town limits.

Time Frame: On-going
Responsible Party: Planning

Policies:

- V.P.7.1 The Town shall guide future development in the sub-area.
- V.P.7.2 The Town shall encourage uses that serve Town residents. These include, but are not limited to, open space/playfields, office, and retail and other commercial uses. Residential uses may be permitted when located over commercial as part of mixed-use development and only with acceptable mitigation of adverse noise, air quality, and other environmental hazards.
- V.P.7.3 Encourage innovative designs, phased design schemes and mixes of uses that are consistent with the Los Gatos Boulevard Plan and Design Standards.

North Forty

- V.P.7.4 Site plans shall be designed to minimize traffic impacts and to preserve sufficient open space.

Implementing Strategies:

- V.I.7.1 Design standards: Prepare development standards that include criteria and provisions for comprehensive design review, recognizing the area as a “gateway” to Los Gatos.

Time Frame: 2001 - 2002

Responsible Party: Planning

- V.I.7.2 Specific Plan: Prepare and adopt a specific plan for this sub-area.

Time Frame: 2001 - 2002

Responsible Party: Planning

- V.I.7.3 Planned developments: Process major developments as planned developments.

Time Frame: On-going

Responsible Party: Planning

- V.I.7.4 Proactive guiding role: Take a proactive role in defining desirable uses and site design by various means, including but not limited to:

- ☐ Exploring methods of financing infrastructure improvements.
- ☐ Working with property owners and prospective developers to facilitate orderly development.

Time Frame: On-going

Responsible Party: Planning

- V.I.7.5 Project Review: Evaluate proposed uses and designs to ensure they are consistent with the Los Gatos Boulevard Plan and Design Standards. Developer's may be asked to provide surveys, market studies and other information deemed necessary to assure these objectives are met.

Time Frame: On-going

Responsible Party: Planning

- V.I.7.6 Cut-through traffic: Ingress and egress shall be designed to minimize opportunities for traffic impacts on surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Time Frame: On-going

Responsible Party: Planning

Policies:

- V.P.8.1 Encourage mixed use development (office/medium-high density residential) north of Lark Ave.

- V.P.8.2 Encourage development of residential rental units.

- V.P.8.3 Development shall incorporate features to buffer dwelling units from noise and other impacts.

*East Los Gatos
Boulevard*

- V.P.8.4 Encourage parcel assembly to provide greater design flexibility and minimize driveways along Los Gatos Blvd.

Implementing Strategies:

- V.I.8.1 Mixed use: Projects proposing all office or all residential will be evaluated to ensure that the Town's desire for mixed use is fulfilled. Shared parking for projects with mixed use will be allowed.

Time Frame: On-going

Responsible Party: Planning

- V.I.8.2 Rental/affordability preference: Evaluate proposals with residential uses to assure that the Town's housing goals are being furthered.

Time Frame: On-going

Responsible Party: Planning

- V.I.8.3 Planned developments: Process major development proposals as planned developments.

Time Frame: On-going

Responsible Party: Planning

- V.I.8.4 Adopted Plans: Evaluate proposed uses and designs to ensure they are consistent with the Los Gatos Boulevard Plan and Design Standards Plan.

Time Frame: On-going

Responsible Party: Planning

- V.I.8.5 Noise: Applications for projects that front on Los Gatos Blvd and/or back up to property on National Ave. or Camino del Sol shall include a noise study proposing mitigation measures to reduce noise impacts on existing and future residents.

Time Frame: On-going

Responsible Party: Planning

- V.I.8.6 Mixed use design: Develop and adopt standards for mixed use design, to be used in the review process of all mixed use developments.

Time Frame: 2001 - 2002

Responsible Party: Planning